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United for Quality Care

March 25, 2022  
District 1199 New England  
Before the Government Administration and  
Elections Committee

## **In Support of SB 473: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE CONTRACTING STANDARDS BOARD**

Good Afternoon Senator Flexer, Representative Fox, and members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. The New England Healthcare Employees Union District 1199 represents 26,000 members across Connecticut in a variety of private and public direct healthcare settings, including 7,000 health care workers at state agencies. We are here today to testify in support of SB 473.

The State Contracting Standards Board (SCSB) serves an important role to make certain that state contracting and procurement requirements are understood and carried out in a manner that is open, cost effective, efficient and consistent with State and Federal statutes, rules and regulations. The SCSB was established as a watchdog agency in 2007 following the John G. Rowland Administration corruption scandals and the debacle involving widening Interstate-84 in the Cheshire area in 2006 and the failure to properly install drains along the highway.

Unfortunately, since its inception, the SCSB has never been able to fully carry out its functions because it has never been sufficiently staffed. For most of its existence the board has survived on the labors of only one full-time employee. There was a Chief Procurement Office who left years ago and the board has not been allowed to hire a new employee to fill the vacant position.

The board has requested \$467,055.00 to hire additional staff, but the Governor has refused to adjust funding for the SCSB in his new budget proposal. The SCSB is forced to retain only two staff members, an executive and an intern, effectively gutting the agency in the face of increasing need for contracting and procurement oversight.

SB 473 seeks to make revisions to provisions concerning the SCSB. Among the revisions, SB 473 would expand the board's authority to include quasi-public agency and municipal procurement. It would require the hiring of five full-time staff. Finally, it would prohibit the Governor from reducing allotments to the board and limiting the selection of contractors from a list without a competitive process to emergency procurements. All of these are terrific steps forward.

Please support SB 473. Thank you for your time.